DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 055 295 CG 006 670

AUTHOR Trueblood, Roy W.; McHolland, James D.
TITLE Self-Actualization and the Human Potential Group Process.
INSTITUTION Kendall Coll., Evanston, Ill.
PUB DATE [70]
NOTE 17p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *College Students; *Group Experience; *Groups; Human Development; *Personal Growth; *Self Actualization

ABSTRACT

A control group design was used to determine whether junior college students who participated in a Human Potential Group became more self actualized than those who didn't. Growth in self-actualization was measured through pre- and post-administrations of the Personal Orientation Inventory. Findings show that (1) students in the Human Potential Groups made significantly greater movement toward self-actualization than the controls; and (2) changes were generally distributed among the Human Potential participants rather than limited to a few. (TL)

ED055295

# SELF-ACTUALIZATION

# AND THE HUMAN POTENTIAL GROUP PROCESS

Roy W. Trueblood, Counselor
Kendall College
Evanston, Illinois

James D. McHolland, Director
Counseling Department
Kendall College
Evanston, Illinois

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

CG 006 670

# SELF-ACTUALIZATION AND THE HUMAN POTENTIAL GROUP PROCESS

Many in the field of education have held that self-concept is a key factor in motivation or lack of it (Frymier, 1970) but there are differing opinions concerning how to change self-concept. Some have held that if you can change a person's behavior, you, therefore, change the way he thinks about himself. Give a person the tools and directions necessary to be successful and he will develop a more positive self-concept.

Others feel it is necessary to attack the problem of self-concept directly. If a person can be helped to gain a more positive self-concept, motivation toward achievement will necessarily follow. Therefore, the task is to develop a way of helping persons change the way they think about themselves from a negative to a more positive attitude.

---

[1] The authors wish to express their appreciation to Dr. Kenneth Howard, Psychology Department, Northwestern University, for his help with the statistical analyses and critical evaluation of this study.

The Human Potential group process[2] was developed with the express purpose and goal of assisting persons to gain a more positive self-image. It was assumed that self-concepts are learned, that one is not born feeling inferior, inadequate, nor superior. If one has learned to think of himself negatively, then he can learn to think of himself in more positive terms as well.

The goals for each Human Potential Seminar participant are an increase in self-affirmation, self-determination, self-motivation and regard for one's fellow man. By self-affirmation we mean liking oneself more because of an honest acknowledgement of strengths and achievements. By self-determination we mean deciding upon and setting immediate as well as long range goals for one's self. By self-motivation we mean feeling that one has some control over his own life, has an understanding of his own personal value system, a sense of autonomy and independence, and can achieve the goals he has set for his life. Regard for one's fellow man is self explanatory, but we would emphasize that regard for others is built upon a more positive attitude toward oneself. All of these goals are vital components of what has been termed "self-actualization" by Maslow (1954) and others.

---

[2] For more specific information concerning the Human Potential process write: Dr. James McHolland, Kendall College, 2408 Orrington, Evanston, Illinois 60204.

The group process is structured and positively oriented. Students are encouraged to share formative life experiences, indicate achievements, satisfactions and successes, consciously explore and share personal value systems. In addition, they share what they feel to be personal strengths and receive feedback from other group members. A method of conflict resolution is demonstrated and personal goals are set in accordance with personal value systems and strengths.

The Human Potential Seminar at Kendall College is an accredited course (2 semester hours) with enrollment limited to a maximum of 12 students. Each class meets for approximately four hours each week. In addition, they take other courses to total a normal academic load. Participation in these Seminars is the major variable distinguishing students in the experimental group from the controls.

The present study was designed to discover if the Human Potential group process does, in fact, help students move significantly in the direction of self-actualization.

## Method and Procedure

In general, the self-actualizing person is seen as developing and utilizing his unique capabilities, or potentialities, and is free of many of the inhibi-

tions and emotional turmoil characteristic of those less self-actualized. The Personal Orientation Inventory, developed by Everett Shostrom (1963), appeared to be the best and most appropriate instrument available to measure this construct.

The P.O.I. is composed of 150 two-choice comparative value and behavior judgements. The scales are as follows. The first is TI/Tc, or Time Competence, Time Incompetence. This scale measures the degree to which an individual lives in the present as contrasted with the past or future. The time competent person lives primarily in the present, is aware of what is going on around him and is in touch with his own feelings and reactions. The time incompetent person lives either in the past with guilts, regrets, and/or resentments, or in the future with idealized plans, expectations, predictions, and fears. The second is the I/O scale which is designed to measure whether an individual's mode of reaction is characteristically "self" oriented (Inner Directed) or "other oriented" (Other Directed). Inner, or self directed individuals are guided primarily by internalized principles and motivations while other directed persons, to a greater extent, tend to be influenced by peer groups or other external forces.

Scores on the other 10 scales are intended to

reflect a facet important in the development of self-actualization. The SAV (self-actualizing value) scale measures the degree of affirmation of the primary values of self-actualizing people. The Ex (existentiality) scale measures the ability to situationally or existentially react without rigid adherence to principles. The Fr (feeling reactivity) scale measures sensitivity or responsiveness to one's own needs and feelings. The S (spontaneity) scale measures freedom to react spontaneously or to be oneself. The Sr (self-regard) scale measures affirmation of self because of worth or strength. The Sa (self-acceptance) scale measures ability to affirm or accept oneself in spite of weaknesses or deficiencies. The Nc (nature of man) scale measures degree of the constructive view of the nature of man as contrasted to a pessimistic outlook. The Sy (synergy) scale measures ability to transcend dichotomies or tolerate and constructively use ambiguity. The A (acceptance of aggression) scale measures the ability to accept our natural aggressiveness as opposed to defensiveness, denial, and repression of aggression. Scale C (capacity for intimate contact) measures ability to develop intimate relationships with other human beings unencumbered by expectations and/or obligations.

The P. O. I. was administered to entering students of Kendall College as a part of freshman orientation. This testing became the pretest for both groups in the present study. At the end of the first semester 33 students enrolled in the Human Potential Seminars were re-tested and 62 students who had been enrolled in Freshman Composition classes, but not in the Human Potential Seminars, were also re-tested and served as the control group.

## Results

On the pretest it was established that there were no significant differences between experimental and control populations with the exception of the synergy scale. As Table 1 indicates, the control population scored significantly higher on this scale than the experimental group. Table 2 shows, in addition, that the average scores of the experimental group were higher than the control group on 8 out of 12 scales, and significantly higher on the Inner Directed and Self-Regard scales.

We were interested in determining what percentage of students in the experimental group were responsible for the positive change. If students moved

up on a scale on the posttest they were given a "plus", if their score dropped, they were given a "minus", and if the score remained the same on both the pre-and posttest they received a "zero". If they received more positive than negative and zero scores on the P.O.I. scales, their total score was "plus", if not, they were given a "minus". Table 3 shows the results when compared with the control group.

Table 3

Number of subjects in experimental and control groups who changed in negative or positive direction on P.O.I. Scales

| Change | Experimental | Control |
|---|---|---|
| + | 20 | 27 |
| - | 10 | 35 |
| 0 | 3 | 0 |

$X^2_{(1)} = 3.85$ $P < .05$.

In applying a goodness-of-fit Chi Square test (McNemar, 1962) with the control group as criterion, we found that the number of students in the experimental group who changed in a positive direction was significantly higher than that of the control group.

We were also interested in finding out which scales of the P.O.I. were responsible for the changes. Table 4 indicates the movement on each variable by the experimental and control groups. Applying the goodness-of-fit Chi Square, we found significant movement on 5 variables: the Inner Directed, Self-Actualizing values, Existentiality, Self-Regard and Nature of Man Constructive scales.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
Insert Table 4 about here
- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Table 4

Direction of change on P.O.I. scales for experimental and control groups with goodness-of-fit Chi Square test

| P.O.I. Scales | Experimental Group | | | Control Group | | | $X^2$ (1) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | + | - | 0 | + | - | 0 | |
| Tc | 13 | 15 | 5 | 26 | 29 | 7 | .09 |
| I | 22 | 11 | 0 | 24 | 38 | 0 | 10.7** |
| SAV | 22 | 10 | 1 | 24 | 30 | 8 | 10.7** |
| Ex | 26 | 7 | 0 | 32 | 26 | 4 | 9.9** |
| Fr | 14 | 15 | 4 | 36 | 16 | 10 | 1.4 |
| S | 18 | 14 | 1 | 25 | 25 | 12 | 2.9 |
| Sr | 20 | 10 | 3 | 20 | 33 | 9 | 10.7** |
| Sa | 18 | 10 | 5 | 32 | 26 | 4 | .12 |
| Nc | 18 | 9 | 6 | 22 | 28 | 12 | 6.1* |
| Sy | 16 | 7 | 10 | 21 | 22 | 19 | 2.7 |
| A | 12 | 18 | 3 | 21 | 22 | 19 | .3.7 |
| C | 16 | 12 | 5 | 34 | 20 | 8 | .49 |

*P < .02.
**P < .01. Three variables are very close to the .001 ($X^2_{(1)}$=10.82) level of significance.

## Discussion

In this study we were attempting to discover if a group process developed at Kendall College helped students move in the direction of self-actualization as measured by the P.O.I. Thirty-three students undergoing the Human Potential group process were compared with 62 students from Freshman Composition classes who had not participated in Human Potential Seminars. The pretest established that both groups were from essentially the same population. On the posttest, Human Potential students' average scores were higher than the control group on 8 of 12 P.O.I. scales with a significant difference on Inner Directedness and Self-Regard. In applying the goodness-of-fit Chi Square test we discovered that the experimental group moved significantly in a positive direction on 5 of the 12 P.O.I. scales, and that a significantly larger percentage of students in the experimental group moved in a positive direction than was true of the controls.

## Discussion of Results

It is important to look at the results in terms of the expressed goals of the Human Potential Seminars. How do the results indicate an increase in self-affirmation, self-determination, self-motivation, and

regard for others? The significant movement on the Inner Directed scale would indicate that students felt more in control of their lives after the Human Potential experience than before and, thus, more self-determining.

In terms of self-motivation, part of the Human Potential process is aimed toward helping students discover their own value system and set goals in relation to it. In addition, students recognize that value systems can and do change. Increases on the SAV and Ex scales would indicate a greater ability to identify with the values held by self-actualizing persons and to be flexible in the application of those values.

Strength assessment as a form of self-affirmation is a vital part of the Human Potential process. That it was successful with our students is indicated, we think, in the increase on the Self-Regard scale.

Regard for one's fellow man is reflected in the increase on the Nc scale. Students developed a more positive attitude toward the nature of man based upon an increased sense of self worth.

It is also enlightening to look at the scales that showed no significant change. Human Potential participants did not appear to gain significantly in their ability to get in touch with their own feelings

(Fr) or to express feelings more spontaneously (S). Nor were they helped to any significant degree to accept their feelings of aggression (A) or to develop a greater capacity for intimate contact (C). However, this is neither surprising nor discouraging in light of the purposes and goals of the Human Potential group process. Persons in these seminars were not encouraged to get in touch with their feelings and/or express them more freely. Again, since the focus was on positive rather than negative feedback, feelings of hostility or aggression were simply not relevant. One may have hoped for an increase on the C scale, but again the focus was on personal growth and not necessarily group rapport.

It is particularly interesting to compare the results of this study with that conducted by Culbert, Clark and Bobele (1968) who used the P.O.I. to measure changes of two groups of students involved in a five day sensitivity training laboratory. One group experienced more positive change than the other and the significant changes occurred on the Inner Directed, Spontaneity, Synergy, and Capacity for Intimate Contact scales. Without examining in detail the goals and methodology of sensitivity training, one may at least raise the interesting hypothesis that the type of group process may determine the kinds of changes that

take place among participants.[3]

This study indicates that the Human Potential group process does accomplish what it sets out to do, that is, help students discover and clarify their own values, learn to control and direct their own lives, increase their self-regard, and develop a more positive attitude toward others.

---

[3]Dr. Morton A. Lieberman, who has done extensive research on encounter groups, has concluded that the experience of a participant in an encounter group is not a uniform event, but differs with the kind of group not only in terms of how much change will take place, but also the patterning of change, and the areas of functioning affected. (from a presentation before the APA Convention held at Miami Beach, Florida, September, 1970).

Table 1

Pretest P.O.I. Mean Scores of Human Potential and Freshman Composition classes

| POI SCALE | Freshman Composition | | Human Potential | | MEAN DIFF. | t |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | MEAN | S.D. | MEAN | S.D. | | |
| Tc | 16.29 | 2.91 | 15.84 | 3.31 | **-.45** | **.67** |
| I | **78**.61 | 11.39 | 77.63 | 10.47 | -.98 | .41 |
| SAV | 19.03 | 2.75 | 18.39 | 3.35 | -.64 | .95 |
| Ex | 20.59 | 4.29 | 19.36 | 4.26 | -1.23 | 1.33 |
| Fr | 15.16 | 2.86 | 16.18 | 2.90 | 1.02 | 1.67 |
| S | 11.74 | 2.57 | 11.90 | 3.05 | .16 | .26 |
| Sr | 11.51 | 2.31 | 10.78 | 2.60 | -.73 | 1.37 |
| Sa | 15.53 | 2.97 | 14.72 | 3.17 | -.81 | 1.20 |
| Nc | 11.20 | 2.06 | 10.30 | 2.64 | -.90 | 1.76 |
| Sy | 6.59 | 1.31 | 6.03 | 1.52 | -.56 | 2.00* |
| A | 15.91 | 3.11 | 15.96 | 3.47 | .05 | .06 |
| C | 17.80 | 3.20 | 18.00 | 3.18 | .20 | .29 |
| SAMPLE SIZE | N = 62 | | N = 33 | | | |

*P<.05.

Table 2

Posttest P.O.I. Mean Scores of Human Potential And Freshman Composition Classes.

| POI SCALE | Freshman Composition | | Human Potential | | MEAN DIFF. | t |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | MEAN | S.D. | MEAN | S.D. | | |
| Tc | 15.70 | 3.49 | 15.93 | 3.56 | .23 | .30 |
| I | 75.43 | 14.10 | 82.30 | 11.82 | 6.87 | 2.49** |
| SAV | 18.49 | 3.79 | 19.69 | 3.02 | 1.23 | 1.73 |
| Ex | 21.06 | 4.52 | 21.48 | 4.46 | .42 | .44 |
| Fr | 16.00 | 3.13 | 15.93 | 3.16 | -.07 | .10 |
| S | 11.91 | 2.97 | 12.63 | 2.18 | .72 | 1.38 |
| Sr | 10.77 | 2.82 | 12.09 | 2.66 | 1.32 | 2.27* |
| Sa | 16.09 | 3.51 | 15.66 | 3.76 | -.43 | .55 |
| Nc | 11.11 | 2.38 | 11.09 | 2.33 | -.02 | .04 |
| Sy | 6.48 | 1.43 | 6.57 | 1.17 | .09 | .34 |
| A | 16.45 | 2.96 | 16.06 | 3.17 | -.39 | .59 |
| C | 18.43 | 4.00 | 19.27 | 3.11 | .84 | 1.13 |
| SAMPLE SIZE | N = 62 | | N = 33 | | | |

*P < .05.
**P < .02.

## REFERENCES

Culbert, Samuel A., Clark, James U., and Bobele, H. Kenneth. "Measures of Change Toward Self-Actualization in Two Sensitivity Groups". Journal of Counseling Psychology, 1968, 16:2, pp. 53-57.

Frymier, Jack R. Motivation Quarterly, 1970, 1:1.

Maslow, A. H. Motivation and Personality. New York: Harper, 1954.

McNemar, Quinn. Psychological Statistics. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1962.

Shostrom, E. L. The Personal Orientation Inventory. San Diego: Educational and Industrial Testing Service, 1963.